

Achieving Positive Results In Service Contracting

Excerpt from *Supporting the Army in Transition: Outsourcing as a Solution*, by Susan J. Harvey, **Program Manager**, September-October 2000, p. 41.

The busy and efficient manager always looks for solutions that provide the best return to the taxpayer. Often these solutions can be accomplished by a simple realignment of tasks or laying more work on your best employees. At some point, this strategy will not work and should be replaced with a contracting vehicle for selective outsourcing. The transforming Army will stretch the ingenuity of the local installation manager over the next few years as the total realignment takes place.

At this time, all indicators suggest that it will become increasingly difficult to solve emerging crises with the same old ways of doing business. New and innovative ways of accomplishing the mission will be needed to carry on the tasks at hand. The prudent manager will take charge and mobilize the resources that are necessary to get the job done.

The outsourcing option is fast becoming the method of choice to solve personnel shortfalls. The most difficult part of getting a project under contract, however, is having the will to see it through. To date, no shortages of naysayers exist who will throw obstacles in the manager's path. Several areas to consider as one proceeds down the path are worthy of mention:

- Understand the territory by having a rudimentary idea of basic contract procedures. Know the advantages and disadvantages of sole-source procurements. Recognize the difficulty and time involved in getting a new competitive procurement drafted, approved, and in-place. Research the availability of multiple-award contracts.
- Be realistic. Get a good sense of the ultimate fairness of using the fair market system inherent in private industry, and use it to the advantage of the taxpayer. Don't shy away from the private sector. The open market has a way of self-regulation that inevitably results in a fair price regardless of what the profit margin is.
- Be diligent. The contract manager is like a captain on a sailing ship. The manager ensures that the project remains on course and the ship is properly provisioned and crewed to get where it's supposed to go. Wasteful deviations are quickly corrected, and the crew understands who is in charge. The manager keeps the destination firmly in mind and is persistent about getting there on schedule.

- Do the right thing. No rule is in place to govern every situation. Considerable latitude is offered by the FAR to get the job done. A keen sense of right and wrong is necessary to guide decisions that fall into regulatory gray areas. When in doubt, consult wiser and more experienced managers.